



The Pileup

Newsletter of the CDXA

Solar Cycle 24—Boom or Bust Coming?

By John Scott, K8YC

In an article dated March 5 on “spaceweather.com” the headline screamed, “The Next Solar Maximum the Smallest in 100 Years?” In an article on Reuters news service with a dateline of March 6 the headlined screamed, “Sun’s Next 11-Year Cycle Could be 50 Percent Stronger.” Hello? Did a reporter get some wires crossed or is there disagreement in the scientific community about what the future holds. In either case, the news sure piqued the attention of the amateur radio community.

The article predicting a “bust” cites as its authority scientists from the Solar-Terrestrial Environment Laboratory at Nagoya University in Japan and from the Space Vehicles Directorate, Air Force Research Laboratory, Hanscom AFB in Massachusetts. Their prediction suggests that the Sun may be less active during the next solar cycle than it has been in during the last 100 years.

The results of these scientists are attributed to the “Precursor Method” of prediction. By someone’s measure this method is “one of the most successful solar cycle prediction methods in existence.” The method is based on examin-

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ing the strength of the magnetic fields that congregate in the polar regions of the Sun a few years before the solar minimum of each solar cycle and relating the strength of those fields to the observed sunspot numbers during the next solar maximum. Apparently the thinking is that the magnetic fields provide the “seed” magnetic flux necessary to drive the sunspot activity for the next solar cycle. The article indicates that the hypothesis upon which the findings are based need at least two more years of data by which to statistically test the hypothesis, so I guess the prognosticators have an “out” if their predictions don’t come to pass.

While solar activity may be low on average, extreme solar outbursts are somewhat common even in those cycles of low average sunspot activity. Indeed, in cycle 14 two of the eight most intense geomagnetic storms in the last 150 years were experienced. Solar cycle 13 gave rise to three of the five most energetic proton events even though the sunspot number plateaued at only 88 for that cycle.

(Continued on page 2)

CDXA PacketCluster & Other Communication Systems		
W4DXA (11 mi. NE of Mooresville)	144.93 MHz (1200 bits/second)	441.00 MHz (9600 bits/second)
K4MD Charlotte, NC	144.91 MHz (1200 bits/second)	Not Available on 9600bits/second
NG4DX (Digi near Galax, VA)	144.95 MHz (1200 bits/second) Connect to NG4DX, then type “C W4DXA”	
K4MD (AR Cluster via Telnet)	k4md.no-ip.com	
CDXA Repeater 147.18 MHz (+600)	W4DXA, Near Fort Mill, SC	
World Wide Web Homepage	www.cdxa.org	
Wednesday Luncheon (11:30 AM)	Shoney’s, 355 Woodlawn Road, Charlotte, NC (704-525-4395)	

(Continued from page 1)

What of those who weighed in for the Reuter's article? Their predictive methods are not detailed in the article. The prediction of 30 to 50 percent stronger sunspot activity for Cycle 24 is attributed in the Reuter's article to the Upper Atmospheric Research Section of the National Science Foundation. In their briefing, the NSF team called attention to the fact that since the strongest recent solar cycle in the late 1950s, the appearance of satellites and men in space and more complex electrical grids makes predicting solar phenomena quite important. Representatives of NOAA's Space Environment Center weighed in during the NSF briefing on the importance of predicting individual storms within a couple of days or hours in advance so that preventative preparations can be made.

So, where are we in all this? It seems to be anyone's guess. It will be neither prudent to sell all your radio gear nor to buy all of the latest and greatest gear based on the predictions. I guess we'll just have to fall back on the incantations of the late Hugh Cassidy (WA6AUD) who reminded us that, "DX Is!" Sit back, relax, and bring on Cycle 24. No matter what "Old Sol" gives us, we'll make the best of it.

Is Antenna Relief Possible in NC?

The new North Carolina Section Manager-Elect, Tim Slay (N4IB) advised North Carolina Amateur Radio Operators in one of his first official acts as SM, that the recent events of Hurricane Katrina have opened some eyes to the effectiveness and continuity offered by the Amateur Radio Service in emergencies. In the aftermath of Katrina, several North Carolina legislators on a panel to review emergency preparedness have shown that they may be receptive to legislation that may help bring some consistency to local zoning restrictions on amateur radio antennas.

There are about 40 members on the convened panel. Tim suggests that a personal communication to your legislator or closest committee member can go a long way toward enlisting support for the cause of amateur radio.

Look to the "members only" site of ARRL for the text of Tim's letter. If you cannot find it there, I'm sure Tim can tell you where it is available. The names of the Joint Interim Committee on Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Recovery can be found at: www.ncga.state.nc.us.

New Logon Procedure for BRIARPATCH Mountain

Paul Sturpe advises all CDXA members accessing the CDXA spotting network through the Briarpatch Mountain Digipeater of a new logon procedure outlined below:

1. The Briarpatch digipeater was upgraded on March 4, 2006. User access frequency is now 144.95 MHz.
2. Connect to NG4DX (C NG4DX) on 144.95 MHz. Once the connection is established with NG4DX, connect to W4DXA (C W4DXA). You may then use normal AR-Cluster Commands. (Please don't forget to define your station attributes to AR-Cluster.)
3. When departing for the day, type BYE (can be abbreviated to B) to shut down the connection to AR and release the digipeater. Please avoid merely shutting down your PC and/or your TNC since it takes a while for the network to "clean up" these types of abnormal terminations.

The Pileup

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Published monthly 10 times per year, excluding the months of June and December.

The purpose of the association is to secure for the members the pleasures and benefits of the association of persons having a common interest in Amateur Radio.

Members of the CDXA shall adhere to "The Amateur's Code" as published from time to time in *The ARRL Handbook for Radio Amateurs*, and shall consist of those valid licensed amateur operators having an interest in promoting amateur radio. Long distance communications (DX) is of special interest to members of the association, but said interest is not a requirement of membership.

Dues are \$30 per year for those using the PacketCluster maintained by the Association, \$15 otherwise, payable each January. Dues are payable by check to the Secretary/Treasurer:
Cliff Wagoner, W3ZL
P. O. Box 577
Davidson, NC 28036

Address, telephone, and email address changes should be directed to the Secretary/Treasurer at the above address or via email at: cliffw@adelphia.net.

Webb Sprints to Near Victory in 6m Contest

Recently, one of our members by the name of Webb came within an eyelash of winning the Fall VHF Six Meter Sprint. Congratulations, Roger, you say? Nay, not so! Congratulations Collin Webb!

If you drift back to the November, 2005 issue of the Pileup, you'll find a recount of Collin Webb, W4AAH (ex: KI4LLH) participating in this first-ever radio contest as a relatively new licensee. You may recall Collin's disappointment at finding out late in the going that a big-time Northeast VHF station had surpassed his QSO total, yet he labored on. Collin probably learned a good life lesson that day, because in his first radio contest we recently learned that Collin's efforts netted him second place overall in the Fall Six Meter Sprint. Collin's age—somewhere in the 10 or 11 years range. (Think back, ladies and gents when you were ten how important it was that you were 11, not 10-1/2 years of age.)

Collin now sports the callsign of his Grandfather. We hope to see much more of him in the VHF contests. Maybe Collin can even push Dad out of his EME seat and be the first teenager to earn WAC via EME. See you in the pileups, Collin.

Brix Off to Western Sahara as S01R

(This notice came to those who subscribe to the CDXA mail reflector a while back. At the time Fabrizio Vedovelli ("Brix") was looking for someone to join the team. I include it here to provide some additional DXcitement for April, 2006. —The Editor)

Hello my friends--

In mid-April I'll be on the road again on a new DXpedition. The target isn't a top ten most wanted but it is still very interesting because it is located in the middle of the Sahara Desert. A new DXpedition to Western Sahara is scheduled for 11 April to 17 April, with callsign S01R (sierra zero one radio).

The team is nearly fully composed at this time (6 Spanish, 1 Italian, 2 USA, 1 Ukrainian) but there is one slot available for an additional team member. Contact me as soon as possible if you are interested in joining us. I'll give you any further information, if needed.

73 de Brix IN3ZNR-WH0Q

DXCC Update

By Gary Dixon, K4MQG

Congratulations go to **Sam Hawes, K4DGJ**, for finally applying and receiving his first DXCC. Sam turned in his first ever DXCC application at the Charlotte Hamfest and received credit for 304 Countries. Most were on CW, and he had cards for all bands 160-10 Meters. Sam had cards checked that had dates back into the mid 1950s. Among them were a number of deleted entities, but his active entity count was still 297. Congratulations to "Dr. Sam" on retiring and finally finding the time to get the paper work finished.

More DXCC cards and applications were checked this year at the Charlotte Hamfest than in the past few years. The statistics are as follows:

- * 2006 = 24 Applications with 2008 Cards.
- * 2005 = 17 Applications and 1669 Cards
- * 2004 = 21 Applications and 1501 Cards

We had more actual cards and applications this year even with the LoTW now assisting in DXCC credits. Most Applications turned in at the Charlotte Hamfest were processed and returned in 2-3 weeks. That is pretty fast for this time of year.

2006 Hamfest Raffle Winner - A Repeat!

At noon on Sunday at the Charlotte Hamfest, a raffle ticket was drawn for a wall clock featuring 9 different clocks showing times all around the world—a great prize for a ham radio operator. The winning ticket was held by Bill Lamay. Sound familiar, you say? This is the very same Bill Lamay who held the winning ticket for the power generator raffled off at the 2005 Hamfest! Assuming that there may have been 200 unique entrants in the drawing each year, the odds of winning two back-to-back drawings are one in forty-thousand. Bill did not come over to pick up the clock right away when told he won this year's prize. Instead, Bill told Ted Goldthorpe he was heading off to South Carolina to buy a few lottery tickets while the cosmos were properly aligned for him. We haven't yet heard how Bill did in the lottery.

The net proceeds equalled almost the exact amount your club sends out to sponsor-in-part one DXpedition. Thanks to you all who supported this year's raffle.

Welcome New Members

The Carolina DX Association welcomes the following new members for 2006:

Tom Hunt	KA3VVJ	Huntersville, NC
Mary Hunt	N4MH	Huntersville, NC

We're glad to see both of you back after a year's hiatus. Full information on Tom and Mary can be found in the roster on the CDXA website.

Members in the News

Ben Antanaitis, WB2RHM, received doubly good news in recent months. First to come to Ben was the news that he had earned a second place finish in the Fourth Call Area for the 2005 CQ WW WPX contest in the Triband/Single All Band Division. Shortly on the heels of that good news was news from the National Contest Journal that he had earned the Top Score in North Carolina for the North American QSO Party-2005 for the RTTY Single Operator category. Congratulations, Ben.

Page 31 of the April 2006 issue of CQ Magazine has a picture and caption of someone you'll all recognize. CDXA President **Ted Goldthorpe, W4VHF** is pictured at the Dayton Hamvention in 2005 receiving his plaque for his *fifth consecutive win* in the Rover category of the CQ WW VHF contest for 2004. Ted was ably assisted by his wife Itice, K4LVV, who also got top billing in the caption. But, read on! The picture caption goes on to say that while Ted was pictured receiving the award for his victory in 2004, he just happened to repeat AGAIN in 2005 for his sixth consecutive win as a Rover. This is getting boring in a wonderful way, Ted and Itice!!! Talk about dynasties....

In the same article on the CQ WW VHF contest, **Josh Fisher, W4WJF** won a plaque as the single operator winner for the Single Operator, 2 Meter Division.

Apparently a lot of CDXA members participated in the CQWW VHF contest, because as you read the contest results the names of **Phil Martin, K4ATM**, **Bill Fisher, W4GRW**, **Thomas Wright, N4HN**, and **Paul Trotter, AA4ZZ** all pop out at you.

After reading the comments made by **Todd Brady, W4WTB**, on the 3830 website following the 2005 CQWW SSB WPX contest, we'd almost bet that we'll

be seeing Todd's name in at least one of the winner's categories when the official results are published in the future. Todd operated QRP in the contest and had a claimed score of 714,090. The excitement and awe of working a major contest as a QRPer are obvious from Todd's comments. We hope his effort will be rewarded accordingly.

There will be no rest for **John Scott, K8YC** from the chores of editing newsletters. John was recently asked by the officers of INDEXA to edit the newsletter of that organization. The first issue coming out under John's blue pencil will be in a few weeks.

Joe Blackwell off to the Andamans!!

As this is being written, Joe Blackwell, AA4NN, is packing his bags for a trip to the Andaman Islands to operate as VU4AN/VU3JLW during the upcoming Hamfest to be held there. The operating dates are to be April 18-20. The National Institute of Amateur Radio (NIAR) sought to have the Ministry of Communications in India extend the operating period to give more deserving souls a chance to work the several teams planning to operate in the Andamans during the upcoming hamfest. As of the early evening of April 8, AA4NN advises me that the Ministry of Communications has granted an extension of the operating period through April 25.

You probably recall that the first DXpedition to the Andamans in many years had its operating time cut short when the 2004 Tsunami struck and the amateur radio team immediately switched over to emergency communications mode from DXpedition mode to assist survivors of that disastrous event.

In a note sent to Carl Smith, Editor of **QRZ DX**, Joe cautions all attempting to work the various Andaman teams to be certain you accurately copy the callsign of the operator you are working. *All* callsigns used for the hamfest event will have a prefix of VU4AN so you'll have to be very careful in knowing who you work to ensure you get a QSL card. There will be dozens of stations on the air using the VU4AN prefix! Joe's callsign will be as listed above—VU4AN/VU3JLW.

A list of the participants can be seen at:

<http://www.niar.org/hamfest/participants.html>.

CDXA Embroidered Shirt Order Blank
(Submit by May 10)

Use this Order Blank to order shirt(s) listed below from Lands' End with the CDXA logo embroidered on the left chest. If the shirt has a pocket, the logo will be above the pocket. The logo has a medium dark blue background, yellow letters, and silver/gray antenna structure. Color selection of shirts is chosen to fit the color scheme of the logo.

- Men's sizes: S: 34-36, M: 38-40, L: 42-44, XL: 46-48, XXL: 50-52 (figures are chest sizes in inches).
- For an additional \$5.38 you can personalize any of the shirts by adding your call and/or name above the logo. It will be stitched in the same yellow thread used in the logo. The personalization can be up to 12 characters, including spaces, but only six characters will fit directly above the logo. Three examples: 1. Dick (counts as four characters), 2.) Dick W3OA (counts as nine characters), 3.) Dick, W3OA (counts as ten characters).
- There are two options for delivery. The least expensive is for you to pick up your shirts at a Wednesday lunch or Club meeting. For an extra \$3.00, we will mail to you.
- You can see the products listed below on the CDXA web site, <http://www.cdxa.org/>
- If you want a shirt for your XYL, a tall or big size, or a different color, please contact Dick Williams at (704) 658-0915 or via email at W3OA@adelphia.net.
- Send your order Blank and check for the FULL amount (made out to Dick) to:
Dick Williams; 398 Lakeview Shores Loop; Mooresville, NC 28117. Dick needs these by May 10.**

Style	Color	Item No.	Price**
Cotton, Short Sleeve, Super-T	Chambray Heather	60393	\$20.43
Mesh Polo, Banded Short Sleeve (ribbed)	Deep Chambray Heather	29373	\$28.49
Mesh Polo, Hemmed Short Sleeve (turned and stitched)	Deep Chambray Heather	29326	\$28.49
Mesh Polo, Hemmed Short Sleeve, Pocket	Gray Heather	54799	\$28.49
Mesh Polo, Banded Short Sleeve, Women's	Light Sea Blue	29378	\$28.49
Sweatshirt	True Navy	73670	\$37.63
Chambray, Short Sleeve, Buttondown Collar	Antique Indigo	51656	\$36.55
Chambray, Long Sleeve, Buttondown Collar	Antique Indigo	51963	\$38.70
Denim, Short Sleeve, Buttondown Collar	Light Antique Indigo	71773	\$36.55
Denim, Long Sleeve, Buttondown Collar	Light Antique Indigo	67658	\$39.24
Heavyweight Denim, Long Sleeve, Buttondown Collar	Light Antique Indigo	68196	\$46.23
Outrigger Jacket	Dark Navy	74896	\$49.99

** The prices shown assume we order a minimum of six items from the product category and include the logo charge, sales tax, and delivery to a Wednesday lunch or Club meeting.

Item No.	Size	Price Each	Add \$5.38 for Call/Name	Call/Name on Shirt	Total Price Each	Quantity	Total

Ship to:

Name: _____

Callsign: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Add \$3.00 for Home Delivery of each shirt \$ _____

GRAND TOTAL for order \$ _____

Note

Lands' End has a variety of Business Outfitters products beyond those shown on the order blank. You can see them at Lands' End web site (<http://www.landsend.com>, then pick "Business Outfitters" on the left side of the page).

The key to ordering is to have at least six items of the same type to acquire the lowest embroidery fee. The items on the order blank were chosen with this in mind and to provide a quality product at the lower end of the price scale. If you are interested in another type of product - such as a Polartec pullover, sweater, duffel bag, or jacket - please contact me, and I will canvass the membership via email to see if there is interest from others that might enable us to achieve a six item minimum. Alternatively, if you simply must have a special item of your choice, any item can be ordered by paying an additional \$5.50 embroidery fee.

There are other "fancier" mesh polo shirts with stripes on the collars and/or cuffs, and there are pima cotton polo shirts. These items are of the same "type" as the items on the order blank, but carry a higher garment price for the added detailing. Thus, they can be ordered and will qualify under our minimum order quantity with the items shown on the order blank. "Ya pays yer money, and ya takes yer choice!" If interested in one of these other products visit the Lands' End web site to get the product details and give me a telephone call to discuss your order needs.

Dick Williams, W3OA
w3oa@adelphia.net
(704) 658-0915

Carolina “Edge of Space” Shot a Success

On March 18, 2006 a few members of Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society visited the Edge of Space. Not in person, but in a way that apparently is catching on with far more people that I ever knew about before that date. A number of ham radio experimenters are sending aloft packages using helium filled balloons populated with APRS systems, cameras, temperature sensors and the like. The APRS system provides real time tracking as well as providing a vehicle for telemetry of other data of the flight profile.

My exposure to these “goings on” came to me via an email message from Paul Ponak, AD4IE, on the afternoon of March 18 alerting me to the successful launch earlier in the day of Carolina EOS1. There is a website full of great information at www.carolinaeos.org. On the home page is a wonderful photo taken from 72,000 feet by a miniature camera aboard Carolina EOS1. Also on the website are a number of other photos taken of flight preparation, details of the payload, and actual in-flight photos. A number of links to other sites in this new hotbed of activity will keep you busy reading for a long time.

I understand that Bill Turner, W4WNT, and Bill Fisher, W4GRW, also were witnesses to the event. However, W4WNT’s involvement came from Discovery Place where Bill first saw Carolina EOS1 reported via an APRS packet when the payload reached only 15 feet of altitude. After receiving FAA approval for the flight, the balloon rose to approximately 72,000 feet before bursting and gently descending to earth via a parachute somewhere between Lumberton and Fayetteville, NC. A radar reflector carried as part of the payload guaranteed that the package was visible to FAA radar while the balloon was at altitudes where commercial aircraft operate. The APRS data was quite helpful to the chase team to recover the payload at the conclusion of the flight.

Post-flight analysis using telemetry data shows altitude, ascent/descent rate and downrange distances. Visit the website to learn more. This is an example of creativity at its best.

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Mobilin’ Through the NC QSO Party

By Ron Bailey, AA4S

Well, another fun QSO Party is in the record books. This time I decided to start in the north and run south to Cherokee in an effort to avoid running the northern counties in the dark and, possibly, in the snow like in 2005. I added three more counties this year (Alleghany, Wilkes, and Ashe) for a total of 18 and probably could have done a better job of apportioning the time spent in each one. But I do have to run through Avery (67 Qs) and Jackson (72 Qs) twice to get where I’m going. By contrast, I only made 19 QSOs in McDowell and didn’t even get to my favorite spot where I had a 111 QSO hour in ’05! Instead I opted to spend that time in Mitchell parked in a cemetery high on a hill where it was “dead quiet”. (Those cemeteries always are!)

Similarly, I spent more time in Madison because it seems to be popular (59 Qs) compared with Buncombe (only 30 Qs) which I raced through as quickly as possible due to congestion with its high noise level around Asheville.

Another observation was that even though 20 meter CW was a bit more productive than last year (86 vs. 41 QSOs) it was pretty much useless after my run at 2100 UTC. My conclusion is that during this part of the cycle the bonus county of Cherokee needs to be activated from 1700 to 2130 UTC to give folks the best shot at working it with stations on both 40 and 20 meters and then again from 0100 to 0300 on 75/80 meters.

Thank you to all the participants who patiently followed me during my effort. Thanks also to those who spotted me on the packet cluster and for the County Hunting spots on the Microsoft Internet Explorer @ <http://ch.w6rk.com>. These contributed greatly to my score as well as to my enjoyment. Finally, thanks to Henry Heidtmann and the Forsyth ARC (of which I am now a member) for a great contest. See you next year.
Vy 73, —Ron, AA4S/M

(AA4S’s summary sheet accompanying his “soapbox” above records 543 QSOs in the contest for a claimed score of 134,216 points. Ron’s multiplier total was 64 and he activated 18 counties during his 10 hour “race down the Blue Ridge”. CDXA members who participated in the contest anxiously await posting of the results for Ron and themselves.)

The Toolbox

By Don Daso, K4ZA

Recently, I was asked to build some simple UHF antennas for a commercial client. Choosing a folded dipole driven element meant that I had to create some accurate and repeatable bends in the ends of the elements. The client suggested all sorts of solutions—including using bottles, rods, tubing, and so forth as forms. Instead, I reached for the “Handi-Bender” stored in my tool collection since high school. (I used it then to make a model of the 6M Yagi that I entered as my science fair project!) In minutes, I had the dipole element cut out and formed. Curious, I checked the McMaster-Carr catalog, to find this veritable old tool is indeed still available, costing only six times what I paid for it in 1965.

Shortly after that, another job required some form of insulating “washers,” and the client was sure we’d have to farm out the job to a machinist. An explanation of ARCH punches was in order. And again, a few minutes work with these tools made all the difference. I purchased mine from Harbor Freight (they’re Chinese in origin, but are sharp and accurate, but not as precision-ground as I’d like). A few minutes truing up their edges helped. (Simply smooth them against some 400-600 grit wet/dry sandpaper, worked wet, cleaning up their edges.)

I still recall learning about files from the Ohio University Physics shop guys, who taught me lots of things about metal-working. Files are a cutting tool. In fact, a bunch on one surface. They cut in only one direction. Files aren’t for rubbing; they’re for cutting. Cut in the intended direction, lift the file, then make another cut. Use two hands. One holding the handle and the other holding the end of the file. Take deliberate cuts, but don’t push too hard. Note you can move the file across the work at different angles while the file is still pointed directly away from you. It’s a swiping motion. Once learned, you can make this movement work for you, as the angle will change for different materials (of different hardness).

Every few strokes, take the fingers of the hand holding the end of the file and wipe the teeth from the tang to the end. Doing so will remove the filings from the teeth and prevent gouges. For really fine work, you can rub a soapstone or chalk on the teeth to minimize filings sticking to them.

Use coarse files, bastards and second cuts in that order—to rough out the shape and smooth files for the final finish. There are hand files, mill files, kant files, half rounds, rounds, three square and a lot of other shapes. Files run from 4 to 14-inches in length, and the larger sizes have the coarser teeth. Most machine shop supply stores will have good American-made files from Nicklesson, Lenox or Simmons. Catalogs will usually have pictures and explanations of files. If you can, go to the store and select your own files. Check that the teeth have not rubbed against other files (look for bright spots on the tips of the teeth) and make sure that the files are flat and straight.

Store your files in boxes or some other suitable protective enclosure. Don’t simply toss them in a drawer with other tools! Indeed, files should be protected, and used only on one type of material at a time. If you can afford this luxury, you should move the files “up the scale,” to progressively harder metal over time (say, from brass to aluminum to steel, and so forth).

Finally, in conclusion, I received a query on exactly HOW to go about sharpening that oft-used center punch, mentioned briefly in a previous column. I was rather glib in saying I had not had to do that very often and that it was an easy task. This reader was quick to say that re-pointing a tool was not so easy, and he is indeed correct. Here’s my approach:

First, I have a small O-ring wrapped around the end of my punch. This ring stays there all the time. So that when the punch starts to roll off the tabletop, it turns in a circle. This often helps prevent it from ending up on the floor.

But more importantly, the O-ring serves as a stop for the punch when it’s laid in a V-block (adjust the attachment point accordingly), and set on the table sander. I clamp a straight edge (usually a simple block of ¾-inch aluminum) to the table, set at 30 degrees to the sander’s wheel or belt. Then I can rotate the punch by hand to produce a 60-degree point on the punch. And yes, a sander works much better than a grinding wheel for this application. (The V-block is another Harbor Freight purchase; again, cheap but very useful in the home shop.)

And that “simple block of aluminum” is drilled with a variety of holes, designed to match various tap sizes. It’s a

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quick and easy way to ensure that hand-tapped holes are started straight. You simply guide the tap through the appropriate hole as you begin tapping. Sometimes you're forced to hand tap a hole and since taper taps are becoming increasingly harder to find these days, this simple little gadget helps you guide the tool straight into the hole. A future column will deal with taps and dies in detail. What's in your toolbox? —K4ZA

Tower Works

Specializing in Rohn guyed towers
Antenna repairs/installations

Don Daso

515 Withershinn Drive
Charlotte NC 28262
704-594-9853 704-408-7948 (cell)
e-mail: k4za@juno.com

CDXA Shirt Order

It's that time again. Dick Williams, W3OA, is preparing another order of shirts with the CDXA logo from Lands' End. In response to various requests, this year's offering includes some new items: a super-T, a polo shirt with a pocket, a sweatshirt, a jacket, and, last-but-not-least, a women's style polo shirt. All these items are described in further detail, with pictures, on the CDXA web site, www.cdxa.org.

The enclosed order form shows the items and colors Dick picked from the Lands' End catalog. Lands' End offers a wide range of items in a variety of colors. If you think you'd like to order something that isn't on the order form, go to www.landsend.com and click on "Business Outfitters" on the left side of the page. If you see something you like, contact Dick, (704) 658-0915 or w3oa@adelphia.net. There is more information regarding this option on the back of the order form.

Dick needs your order by May 10 to include it in the group order.

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Hamfest Banquet—Always a Good Time

Charlotte Hamfest is always a good time to renew old acquaintances, and the CDXA banquet is but one time to do it. This year several members of the recently returned Peter One team were in attendance. We were glad to see the "Tennessee Team" here again.



Bob Allphin, K4UEE presents a map of the world signed by all members of the Peter One team to CDXA for its support of the Peter One DXpedition.



The "Tennessee Team" arrived in force again this year.



Ted and Itice Goldthorpe thank Wayne Mills for coming from HQ to check QSL cards and join us.

The Back Page

A number of members have asked when they'd be able to buy a **CDXA shirt**. Wait no more. Dick Williams, W3OA, is putting together an order. Details are on Page 7 of this issue, and an order blank is attached to this issue. Full color details as well as an order blank can be found on the home page of the CDXA website. Orders are due to Dick by May 10 to make this purchase cycle. Don't delay.

What can you expect in **Solar Cycle 24**? It does not appear there is consensus yet amongst the sun watchers. Read the story starting on Page 1.

Read about **members in the news** on Page 4.

Look for Joe Blackwell (AA4NN) on the **Andaman Islands** and Farbrizio "Brix" Vedovelli (IN3ZNR) in **Western Sahara** on upcoming DXpeditions in April. Read about Joe on Page 4 and Brix on Page 3.

Section Manager Tim Slay (N4IB) advises North Carolina hams there there is a window of opportunity to gain some consistency in zoning ordinances on **amateur radio antenna structures**. See page 2, inside.

Upcoming contests:

State QSO parties in April: April 15-Michigan and Ontario; April 22-23-Florida

May 13-14 CQ National Foxhunting Weekend

May 27-28 CQWW WPX CW Contest

Cliff Wagoner, W3ZL
P. O. Box 577
Davidson, NC 28036

cliffw@adelphia.net

First Class Mail

See something wrong with your address label? Notify W3ZL at once, please.